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 (NEW COMMENTS FROM WHITE HOUSE)  
 BY DANIEL F. GILMORE

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- THE WHITE HOUSE SAID SATURDAY PRESIDENT REAGAN, "STANDING FIRMLY BEHIND" EMBATTLED CIA DIRECTOR WILLIAM CASEY, HAS RECEIVED ENCOURAGING ASSURANCES FROM SEVERAL SENATORS THAT THEY "WILL NOT RUSH TO JUDGMENT."

WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR DAVID GERGEN REITERATED FOR THE SECOND STRAIGHT DAY THAT REAGAN'S FAITH IN HIS CIA DIRECTOR HAS NOT BEEN SHAKEN BY DEMANDS OF KEY SENATE REPUBLICANS FOR HIS RESIGNATION.

"BASED ON THE EVIDENCE, THE PRESIDENT TRUSTS AND HOPES HIS NAME WILL BE CLEARED," GERGEN TOLD REPORTERS. "HE WANTS HIM TO STAY ON THE JOB."

CASEY, UNDER FIRE FOR IRREGULARITIES IN HIS PAST BUSINESS DEALINGS AND HIS CHOICE OF THE SINCE-RESIGNED MAX HUGEL TO DIRECT COVERT OPERATIONS, HAS PROMISED TO DELIVER TO THE SENATE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE BY MONDAY EXPLANATIONS AND DOCUMENTS THAT "WILL LAY THIS ENTIRE CONTROVERSY TO REST."

THE COMMITTEE WILL MEET TUESDAY TO REVIEW CASEY'S ANSWERS AND THE RESULTS OF ITS STAFF INVESTIGATION.

"THE PRESIDENT BELIEVES BILL CASEY IS A GOOD AND DECENT MAN WHO HAS SERVED THE COUNTRY WELL FOR A GOOD MANY YEARS. HE ALSO BELIEVES THAT MR. CASEY IS DOING A FINE JOB AT THE CIA. IN THE LIGHT OF THAT BACKGROUND, THE PRESIDENT IS STANDING FIRMLY BEHIND MR. CASEY," GERGEN SAID.

GERGEN SAID DURING "THE LAST 24 HOURS, SEVERAL SENATORS HAVE INDICATED TO THE WHITE HOUSE THAT THEY WILL NOT RUSH TO JUDGMENT WITH REGARD TO MR. CASEY. THEY SAID THEY BELIEVE IT'S IMPORTANT, OUT OF FAIRNESS, TO WAIT UNTIL ALL THE FACTS ARE IN AND CAREFULLY WEIGHED."

"WE REGARD THIS AS AN ENCOURAGING SIGN," HE SAID.

THE SPOKESMAN CITED SENS. HENRY JACKSON, D-WASH., AND PAUL LAXALT, R-NEV., BUT SAID THE NAMES OF THE OTHERS WERE "CONFIDENTIAL" BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT SPOKEN OUT PUBLICLY. HE SAID THEY INCLUDED DEMOCRATS AS WELL AS REPUBLICANS.

LAXALT, CIA GENERAL COUNSEL STANLEY SPORKIN AND FORMER U.S. INFORMATION AGENCY DIRECTOR LEONARD MARKS CALLED A NEWS CONFERENCE SATURDAY TO DEFEND CASEY. BOTH LAXALT AND CASEY PLAYED KEY ROLES IN REAGAN'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

"WE ARE NOT GOING TO PERMIT A PERFECTLY DECENT MAN TO BE SAYAGED," LAXALT SAID, ADDING HE SEES "NO INDICATION WHATSOEVER" THAT CASEY WILL RESIGN.

DEMANDS FOR CASEY'S RESIGNATION CAME FROM SEN. BARRY GOLDWATER, R-ARIZ., CHAIRMAN OF THE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE; ASSISTANT SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER TED STEVENS OF ALASKA AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE MEMBER WILLIAM ROTH, R-DEL.

STEVENS AND ROTH CHARGED CASEY HAD COMPROMISED HIMSELF. THEY SAID HE IS UNABLE TO SERVE EFFECTIVELY IN HIS SENSITIVE POST.

LAXALT SAID HE "RESPECTFULLY DISAGREES."

"IT IS MY VIEW THAT HE ENJOYS THE RESPECT OF PEOPLE WITHIN THE AGENCY," LAXALT SAID. "TO MY COLLEAGUES I SAY, 'KEEP AN OPEN MIND. GIVE HIM A FAIR SHOT.'"

GERGEN SAID WHITE HOUSE COUNSEL FRED FIELDING REVIEWED THE MATERIAL ON CASEY "AND HAS FOUND NOTHING TO CHANGE" HIS ORIGINAL EVALUATION THAT "CASEY SHOULD STAY ON."

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